

McMorran Park

George Stark McMorran

Born in Ontario, George Stark McMorran was just two years old in 1890 when he came to Victoria with his father, George McMorran Sr. and mother, Isabelle Stark. George McMorran Sr. worked as a foreman for R.P. Rithet, at Broadmead Farm, where the family also resided for nine years. As the farm was close to Cordova Bay, George became familiar with the area when his family spent their summer vacations camping along the beaches. Growing up in this environment, George developed his interests in fishing, hunting and camping which would ultimately influence his later entrepreneurial pursuits.



McMorran family portrait c. 1890



Dougall and McMorran real estate office with Model T automobile in front c. 1910

In 1909, with friend Fred Dougall, they formed a real estate and brokerage business called Dougall & McMorran. The name Doumac is a direct result of this partnership and is recognized today by Doumac Avenue and Doumac Park. George involved himself in many projects as development expanded towards Cordova Bay. McMorran Lane, McMorran Place and in 2010 McMorran Park were named to honour the family's dedication to community development in Cordova Bay.



George McMorran in military uniform c. 1910

George joined the military and would serve in World War I as a gunner from 1917-1918.

When George returned to Cordova Bay, real estate was flat and, not knowing quite what to do with his life; he took a friend's suggestion to heart and opened a store. He called it Canuck Tea Room. (See The McMorran Tea Rooms for more on this story).



McMorran Canuck Tea Room c. 1919

Following his marriage to Ida Richards, in September 1922, George and Ida became parents of four boys; Bruce, Eric, Richard, and David. George's love for Cordova Bay showed through as he was the area's postmaster for 40 years. Even in retirement George and Ida built a new home on a 20 acre lot between Catalina Terrace and Lochside Drive. He took on the subdivision process himself at the age of 78. George's 80 year admiration of Cordova Bay ended in 1971 when he passed away at the age of 82.



Ida McMorran with baby Bruce c. 1924

The McMorran Tea Rooms

George S. McMorran, being a man of vision, was certainly not one to back down from a challenge and on May 20, 1919, when a friend suggested he open a store, George worked day and night to construct a small 6' x 12' building.



McMorran's Tea Room, Cordova Bay c. 1920

He called it Canuck Tea Room and opened at 7am on May 24, 1919. By the end of the day there was \$4.65 in sales of cigars, Fairall's pop, John Vaio's nut bars, Royal Dairy ice cream and 1 cent candy. Expansion was the next step to accommodate the growing needs of the community. In 1921, George added another Tea Room and renamed it McMorran's Tea Rooms. When the tea tables were moved outside this allowed beach goers to come inside and dance to live music. By 1926, George added a post office to the busy store. This was followed by the construction of a ballroom in 1927 and a motor court where the cabins rented for \$50 for the entire summer.



McMorran's Auto Court, Cordova Bay c. 1920



George McMorran, McMorran's Seaview Room c. 1950

After World War II, George's sons Eric and Bruce started running McMorran's. In 1954 they renovated the ballroom and named it the Sea View Room. The most impressive feature of the ballroom was the installation of a maple dance floor. It had a special sprung floor with maple planks that intersected so the dancers could spin with the grain of the wood. McMorran's on a Saturday night was the most romantic spot in town, especially when they would turn the house lights down and let the moonlight flood in. Development continued through the latter part of the 1950's and in 1960 they opened the Sea View Plaza on Doumac Avenue.

The McMorran's in the Community

George and Ida offered the use of the pavilion to the community regularly. Events along the beach in front of the store organized by the McMorrans included regattas, community picnics, bon fires and sporting events. Still remaining the hub of the community, dances were eventually replaced with various local events such as Claremont High School Graduations, Habitat Acquisition Trust Awards Night and Saanich's Search for Talent youth program to name a few.



The starting block for The Cordova Bay Regatta beside McMorran's c. 1950

McMorran Park

With the pending sale of the properties owned by the McMorran Family, 5099 Cordova Bay Road became a priority for Saanich. The small 627 sq.m. (0.155 acre site) was acquired on March 18, 2010. Before this purchase, the community had a developed, but narrow, Public Beach Access. The pairing of these two properties now offers Saanich residents 874 sq. m. (0.204 acre) of waterfront aptly named McMorran Park.



Cordova Bay Regatta c. 1950 located on what is now McMorran Park Beach



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